1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

closely paralleling that of their Hindu neighbors. On the other hand, their social organization is relatively lacking in the cleavages of caste which are so prevalent all about them. Apart from the village, which is usually composed of a number of patrilineal kin-groups, territorial organization is weakly developed, and the tribe as a whole has never been politically unified so far as historical records indicate.

Even as a unique people the Santal merit special attention. Numbering today over three million, the region they occupy contains the richest deposits of iron, coal and other crucial industrial minerals in all of India. The chief source of their livelihood, at least since the nineteenth century, has been settled agriculture. Prior to the nineteenth century, hunting was also an important livelihood activity, but the great increase in the region's population and subsequent reduction of forest areas has made game extremely scarce; it is now difficult for the inhabitants even to obtain materials for fuel and building purposes. Though the chief source of food and cash is the annual rice crop, a few vegetables are also grown and some fruit trees maintained. Some villages are near enough to a river for fish to be readily obtained, while some villages stock their local ponds. Even prior to the introduction of modern industry in the region, the Santal had ceased to be economically independent. Although they once did some pottery making, weaving, and even iron smelting, they have come to rely almost exclusively on various local Hindu castes for these material products. Women from several low Hindu castes are used frequently as midwives. While almost no Santal are ritually served by Brahmin priests, itinerant Hindu holy men (*sadhu*) visit many Santal villages, consulting horoscopes and offering prayers for a fee or donation.

Most Santal are still agriculturists, but some have turned to

Nonetheless, elite Santal were somewhat more Hinduized

177 556 than their poorer fellows. Some managed to attract a coterie of high-caste but often impoverished Hindus. One hears of wealthy Santal who spent considerable sums on such associates during trips to and attendance at Hindu festivals. Some who 177 were village headmen or Parganaths (multi-village headmen) 556 established enduring relations with the Mahārājā or local 622 zemindar of their region. These Santal often were given respon- 648 sibility for tax collection, in return for which they kept a portion and received grants of land.

177 The Santal have long followed the practice of establishing 608 among themselves, and with other castes, permanent bonds of 648 a kinship type, which are given public recognition in a "flower" (*phul*; Santali and Hindi =flower) ceremony. In some instances an elite family managed to establish such a tie with a Brahman family while ordinary Santal contracted such relations only with other tribals or Hindus of very low caste. *This contrib-* [192] *uted to differential emulation of Hindu practices.* Some of the [583] traditional elite among the southern Santal abandoned beef-eating and cow sacrifice; some affected the dress of high-caste Hindus; a few demanded an end to "capture marriage" (*itut' bapla*) because they did not wish to have close relations with unwealthy families of low status. Though their success in getting the non-elite to follow their Hinduized practices was limited, a certain degree of culture difference was established, to the detriment of solidarity.

177 However, as the historical evidence indicates and as any contemporary observer could infer, contact with Hindu society has been long and/or intensive, and that portion of Santal culture shared by all Santal is so marked with Hindu traits that it would be a monumental task to indicate all of them. All Santal [759] call on neighboring Hindus of low caste to deliver babies.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

TABLE 5

PERCENTAGE OF SANTAL RETURNED AS HINDU
(Census of India 1931)*

	1901	1911	1921	1931
Orissa	44	46	43	48
Chota Nagpur Feudatory States (Seraikela, Kharswan)		0	18	48
Singhbhum	16	3	56	23

tion of villages which follow distinctively Hindu religious practices. I have heard of only one Santal village within the territory occupied by the southern Santal which has abandoned traditional forms of worship and become thoroughly Hinduized. In 1916 Roy reported the conversion to Hinduism of a number of Santal in a Hindu village in Orissa; they were served by an outcast Brahman priest.[1] I met only one Santal who had taken up Hindu religious practices, and he lived in the city of Jamshedpur. Nowhere that I went were Santal served by Brahmans, though in some areas Santal families are occasionally visited by members of the Potkar caste, who bring messages from the dead for a fee. The Santal also employ females of various low Hindu castes to deliver their children and sometimes patronize Hindu practitioners of traditional medicine (*Kubraj*; Hindi).

It is true that until recently the Santal in large numbers took part, in their own way, in various Hindu festivals. At many of the major Hindu festivals the Santal would assemble for mixed dancing, and some would become possessed and speak

* More recent census figures do not contain this information because "caste has been abolished" as a legal entity.

[1] Roy, 1916.

852 a loin-string round the waist of the child. After this the child's mother sits down under the eaves of the house and takes the child in her arms; and she takes some atnaĩ leaves[3] together with her child in her arms.

Now the midwife kneads some cow's dung with water on the eaves, and lets also some dung-water drip down on the child's mother; and receiving some dung-water in her left hand she daubs her head with it and sucks a little in. The child's mother then goes inside and lays the child down on a bedstead. Now the midwife mixes flour in water in three leaf-cups; the flour-water of one cup she sprinkles on all the four legs of the bedstead and thereupon throws this leaf-cup away. After this she sprinkles the flour-water of another leaf-cup first on the village priest, after him on the field priest, after him on the village headman, after him on his deputy, the village headman of morals and his deputy and on the messenger of the village headman, on their breasts. And after these on all the men of the village, on their breasts.

Thereupon she sprinkles the flour-water of the remaining leaf-cup, first on the wife of the village priest, after her on the wife of the field priest, after her on the wife of the village headman, after her on the wife of his deputy, after her on the wife of the headman of morals and on the wife of his deputy, and after her on the wife of the headman's messenger, and after these on all the women of the village, on their breasts.

Now the husband and wife of the house ask each other: Whom shall we name? Then they say if it is a boy: We shall name father, or in case it is a girl: We shall name mother. The first born boy gets the name of his father's father, and the first girl gets the name of her father's mother. The second born gets the name of his mother's father, and the second girl the name of her mother's mother. Those who come afterwards get the names of the brothers and sisters of the father and mother.

Now the midwife comes out into the courtyard, and telling them the name she greets them one after the other and says to them: From to-day please call out to him using this name when hunting and chasing, in case it is a boy, and if it is a girl: Come along you, if you will go and fetch water.

Thereupon they bring gruel with nim[4] in leaf-cups out to the courtyard. They give it first to the village priest and the other village officials in the order mentioned, and after these to all the men of the village. Afterwards they give the village priest's wife and so on all the women. Now the defilement is wiped out, and the child has come in among its relatives. Five days later the barber and the midwife again shave the child alone. Then all is finished.

• 759 What the midwife by customary right gets is as follows: When a boy is born, she gets a piece of cloth, three cubits long, and one maund (i. e., nearly 40 kg) paddy and one wristlet for cutting the umbilical cord; and if it is a girl, she gets a piece of cloth, three cubits long, twenty seers of paddy and one wristlet for cutting the umbilical cord.

[137] [3] Terminalia tomentosa, W. & A. [4] Melia Azadirachta, L. (Melia indica, Brandis).

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

III

(a) Raranic or Herb-Doctor.

In his individual ailments the Santal recognises the disease to be due to either of the three causes as mentioned by Dr. Clements,[1] such as :

1. Natural causes,
2. Human agencies,
3. Supernatural agencies,

Naturally different functionaries are called upon to remedy the different items.

The man called upon to treat the diseases due to natural cause is the Raranic who comes nearest to our modern practising physician. He is a master of many herbs and simples. Like the modern physician he has faith in his drugs and herbs and looks askance on the practices of the spirit doctor or Ojha and his hocus-pocus. He learns his trade as an apprentice to an old practising Raranic who jealously guards the secrets of his herbs and prescriptions. They say that their knowledge is derived mostly by observation of animals attacked with disease and the way these cure themselves. He follows the diseased animal in the jungle and marks the herbs or roots From the encyclopaedic list of prescriptions collected by Rev. P.O. Bodding and Mrs. Bodding, M.B., one would infer that the Santal medical treatment has not been entirely conservative. There are indeed several items which could be taken as survival of primitive prescriptions such as the use of animal refuse or insect preparation, reminding us of the cauldron of Macbeth's witches.

[1]Forrest E. Clement's Primitive Concepts of Disease. University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology, p. 186. Volume 32, No. 2, pp. 185, 252, year 1932.

4: Biswas D, E-3,4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

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174 witches. But the majority comprises of herbs and sometimes also minerals, leading one to suspect strongly the influence of Hindu indigeneous Kaviraji treatment which had been universally adopted (ancient Hindu medicinal treatises having been translated into Arabic and passed through it into mediaeval European pharmacopoeia). Thus for instance the use of Rasa-Sindur is distinctly Hindu, the word Rasa being the old Hindu word for a form of preparation of mercury. Similarly, some names such as Kababchini or tobacco-water show post-Mahomedan adoption.

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824 It may be mentioned here that there is a seasonal ceremonial called Ranjagao for the vitalising or blessing of medicinal plants in general, at the time of the autumnal Dasai parab. This has no reference to any special ingredients but increases the effectiveness of medicine in general. There are certain instructions given as to the time and mode.

757 The method of diagnosis, generally followed, is by feeling the pulse as amongst the Hindu Kavirajes.

(b) **Tejo Theory**

[759]
753 The Santal calls in the Rarantic for diseases due to natural causes. But he also has a theory of disease which in his scientific viewpoint is as natural a cause as infection caused by bacteria. But we can look upon it as an agency which is natural and yet supernatural and sometimes also diffused with human agency. According to them diseases would be caused by a tejo which may be large or very miscroscopic. These tejos are located in different parts of the body, some at the root of the nose and some in different parts of the body.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

Rev. Bodding gives a detailed description of this theory,[1] where he describes how there is a belief of tejo causing leprosy or hydrophobia, etc., how these tejos enter the body through food etc. The tejo germs are often believed to be collected by witches for spreading disease amongst people. In the first place naturally the herbalist tries his drugs but this failing the witch-doctor is called.

The Tejo theory of disease falls in line with what Dr. Clements[2] calls disease-object intrusion. Dr. Clements in his study has apparently left out (at least he has not specifically mentioned) the important pre-Dravidian tribes of Chota-Nagpur such as Santals, Hos, Mundas, etc., and thus in his distribution map No. 2 this portion of India is not shaded as it ought to have been. He has shown this idea to be almost universal in the New World and extended up to Siberia Another area is shown in South-Eastern Asia and the Santal under consideration would show a continuous distribution of this from Chota-Nagpur to the Pacific area. Other centres in Europe, Western Asia and Africa are recorded as being capable of tentative connections with the area of the Santal and South-Eastern Asia. The tejo concept of the Santal is identical with the disease-object intrusion concept in other areas. According to Dr. Clements (to whom the Santal area is unknown) "the criterion is the actual presence in the body of a tangible, supposedly pathogenic substance. Now although the exact nature of this substance varies considerably, such

[1] Rev. P.O. Bodding, Studies in Santal Disease and connected Folklore, Part I, pp. 6-8 Memoirs of the A.S.B., Vol. X, No. 1, pp. 1-133.

[2] Dr. Clements, op. cit., p. 209.

4: Biswas D, E-3,4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

by bongas are called in. There is no female Shaman as the female with supernatural power is always looked upon as wicked, malevolent and is persecuted as a witch. So it is to pit his higher knowledge against the wicked machinations of the witches that the *Jan guru* or *ojhas* are called who thus are important social functionaries curing individuals of their constant depression due to fear of sorcery and the evil eye or acting as village mental sanitation officials. Thus these Santal medicine-men, soothsayers and masters of incantations have to work hand in hand with the chiefs.

The name *ojha*, which the Santal uses, is not a Santal word; it is a Hindi word, used for diviner, enchanter, sorcerer, magician, etc. The word is derived from Sanskrit. The Santal has borrowed this word from the Hindi-speaking people. Rev. P.O. Bodding is of opinion that the Santal has adopted this exorcism from the Hindi-speaking people. His argument in favour of it is that the work of a Santal *ojha* in nature partly resembles that of the Hindu *ojha* and the special *bongas* invoked by the Santal *ojhas* all have names of Hindu origin in addition to their special *bongas*. But a tribe which believes so much in spirits (both malevolent and benevolent) must have some method of propitiation of those spirits as is usual among almost all the primitive tribes of the world.

The *ojha* is also a physician. The difference between the herbal doctors and the *ojha* lies in the fact that the former gives only medicine whilst the latter in addition to giving medicine tries to drive away the disease by magic incantations, etc., by the assistance of his special *bongas* whom he knows how to force to work.

St Culshaw M-8 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

wait for men. Women are protected from the designs of these ghosts by the iron bangle which they wear.

Ghosts of the dead and other private spirits who are given the title of *boiga* form part of the stock-in-trade of the two classes of people among the Santals who deal regularly with the occult- the magicians and the witches. They are bitterly opposed to each other's influence, and they clash for the most part on the battleground of sickness and disease. An exhaustive treatise on the Santal attitude to disease has been published, and shows conclusively that, as with ghosts so with sickness, the ideas of the Santals are common to all the lower strata of society in North India.[1] These ideas are not simple but complex, and range from the realm of the rational to the fantastic. Disease is sometimes ascribed to natural causes, particularly when the chain of causation is fairly obvious and can be repeated in a series of experiments; there is a whole class of food described as *batol*, which means that it is unwholesome. There are hundreds of remedies that require no supernatural aid to make them effective. Some remedies are the property of all, while others are the property of individuals and the knowledge of their ingredients is a closely guarded secret. Chaitan of Churimara began his career as a physician in response to a specific need. When he was a young man a friend had come to him in great distress and said that his boy was vomiting blood. He turned to Chaitan and asked him if he knew of any medicine that would be good for the boy. Chaitan was so sorry for his friend that he promised to do something, although when he said this he had no notion what he should do. As he was setting out for his friend's house he prayed to *Cando* and asked that he might be shown what he ought to do; at the same time he shut his eyes and kicked at the soil. As he opened his eyes again he saw a plant, which he immediately dug up. He ground the roots to make a medicine, and the boy recovered from his sickness. Since then he has applied the same remedy to many other cases. One of his patients had been extremely ill, he said, but was now the father of four or five children! He has been in great demand as a physician, and claims that *Cando* subsequently revealed many remedies to him. Sometimes it is claimed that remedies are made known in dreams. The plant that was first revealed to Chaitan was the *upel kondi* plant, which has a red flower.

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore*, *Memoirs of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. X.

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

There are many individuals famed in some degree as physicians. Some are equivalent to the general practitioners of the West, while others are specialists who possess remedies for particular diseases. There are others who might be described as veterinary physicians. When, however, an illness persists the patient and the relatives suspect that some supernatural agency is at work, and they then call in the *ojha*, or magician. The *ojha* is not necessarily a Santal, though there are now so many Santals who are learned in *ojha* art that it is usually possible for a Santal to be called. They are men possessed of special powers who have gone through a period of training, followed by an initiation ceremony at the hands of an *ojha*, and they in turn pass on their knowledge to their own disciples. Tradition says that formerly this training was strenuous and serious. It took the form of a course that lasted from May until October, the time of the *Dàsàĕ*, which is the same as the Dasserah festival of North India and the Durga Puja in Bengal. Throughout this period the disciples had to attend at the house of the *ojha* every evening until finally they were initiated. At the conclusion of this ceremony the *ojha* used to take his disciples on a begging expedition through the surrounding villages on three successive days.

These begging parties are a familiar sight in the countryside during *Dàsàĕ*, and they represent almost all that is left of the old initiation schools conducted by the *ojhas*. Every village has its bands of youths who meet each night for a month to practise the songs and dances and then go out to collect rice and cash from the neighbours. It is at this time that the *buan* is used. When the young men sally forth they are dressed in picturesque fashion. On this occasion alone men are permitted to wear women's dress. They put on *saris* shaped like a skirt and a small waistcoat, a garment worn by the women in many parts of North India, though it is not normally worn in Bengal. They also don earrings, bangles and anklets, while on their heads they wear turbans in which they fasten peacock feathers.

These bands have little relation to the *ojhas* and they operate under their own leaders. One of the links remaining between this practice and the *ojhas* is the reference in some of the songs to the old *gurus* of the magicians, and in particular the original *guru*, a mythological person named Kamru. The name may possibly refer to a person who came from the western districts of Assam, a region known as Kamrup, but he is now entirely mythical. He is regarded as the originator of magical knowledge and as belonging to the race of *bongas*. According to one version, he is a

Sr Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

BIRTH AND INITIATION

Society takes little notice of the child before it is born, but, through the person of the father, the family and the clan begin to assert their interests. The restrictions enjoined on the father suggest that although his rôle in the heredity of the child is considered to be a relatively minor one, he is nevertheless an instrument through which the future child may be brought into danger and so hurt the interests of the family. During the period of his wife's pregnancy he must strictly observe the rule against taking life and he must avoid all contact with dead bodies. He is therefore excused from all participation in funeral ceremonies; he may not help to carry a corpse or even enter a house in which a death has taken place. If the annual hunt falls during the period he is allowed to accompany the men of the village, but he is not allowed to kill or to carry a slain animal or bird. He must not eat flesh from the head of any animal slain in the hunt or offered in sacrifices.[1] He is not separated from his wife, and my information suggests that intercourse is usual up to about the sixth month. There is a very strong sentiment against a man having sexual intercourse with another woman during his wife's pregnancy. There appears to be no rule as to when intercourse may be resumed after the birth of the child. The women speculate concerning the sex of the coming child. If the mother begins to look sickly, and especially if she becomes thin round the neck, it is a sign that she will have a boy. Although the "quickening" is not marked by any ceremonial, it is recognized as a definite stage in the life of both the new individual and of the mother. When a woman dies with child the procedure to be followed varies according to whether the death has followed the first quickening or not.[2]

Midwives are engaged for the delivery. They are to be found in every large Santal village, and they are generally old women, themselves grandmothers. They receive no special training, but they develop the "knack" for their work by assisting others, and they launch out on their own practice when they have established a reputation for being handy and capable. The midwife may be someone connected with the family, but, if so, she should

[1] Bodding, in the *Santali Dictionary* (Vol. III, p. 337), reports a custom in connection with the *Jom Sim* festival which accords a certain status to the child before birth. I have been unable to confirm his statement. He says that when the *Jom Sim* is observed in the family of a pregnant woman she is served with two platefuls of rice because she is, or rather she represents, "two souls".

[2] The procedure to be followed in the former event and the reason underlying it have already been described in Chapter 8; see p. 92 above.

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

• 759 [602] not belong to the same generation as the parents of the mother. It is better for her to belong to the generation of the grandparents, because it is not fitting for the woman in childbirth to expose her nakedness before anyone who belongs to the generation of her own parents. Midwives are held in respect, and their work puts them in a relation of intimacy with large numbers of their fellow villagers. They are known as *dhai*, the common word in most parts of North India, but they are also referred to as *ojha budhi* and sometimes as *dak' dul budhi*, "water-pouring old women". The midwife is always a Santal, and being an inhabitant of the same or of a neighbouring village, she is not sent for until the pains begin. At the same time all the married women of the village are informed, and they gather at the house in order, as they say, to give courage to the mother now that her time has arrived. On one occasion I was called in to help in the settlement [123] [578] of a dispute in which a woman had been accused of infidelity by her husband. She had gone to her mother's home before the birth of her child—this being an action which is not in accord with Santal ideas—and the strongest evidence of infidelity offered by the husband was the fact that when the baby was born his wife's mother did not inform any of her fellow villagers.

644 The day of delivery is the mother's "sitting day", and the name describes the position of the mother at the time of birth. The mother may sit either on a mat which has been placed on the floor or on a string bed. There seems to be no rule as to which of these two places must be adopted, except that when a woman has been on the floor for the birth of her first child she will continue to sit there for the birth of later children. In either case she remains in the ordinary dwelling house. She is supported at her back by one of the women, who again must be either two generations removed from her or else be of her own generation. It is the duty of the midwife to cut the umbilical cord, and this is not done until after the placenta has fallen. The child is not put to the mother's breast until after the cord has been cut. This is cut with an arrow, having a coin placed beneath it. This is most usually a copper pice, but it may be a coin of higher value when the financial position of the family warrants it, and the coin is given to the midwife. They say that midwives are able to foretell the sex of children still to be born according to the position of certain irregularities on the surface of the umbilical cord which are caused, I am told, by the twisting or congestion of blood vessels. In addition, if they are desired to do

St Culshaw M-S (1902-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

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tents of one are sprinkled near the four legs of the string bed in the house, of the second on the breasts of the men, and of the third on the breasts of the women. Then a brew of *nim*[1] leaves and water is brought out. This is very bitter, and the men to whom it is first presented generally make excuses to escape from having to sip it. All the women take some, out of sympathy, as they express it, with the mother, who drinks a cupful. She often continues to drink small quantities for several days, as it is supposed to aid the flow of milk. At this gathering beer is provided for everyone, and if the family can afford to do so they prepare a meal as well.

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An essential part of the ceremonies is the naming of the child, whereby it acquires a definite status in the village and among the kinsfolk. In the area round Sarenga the naming is sometimes accomplished on a day different from that on which the shaving and bathing take place, and it is the naming ceremony that emphasizes the social obligations of the household. The villagers may bathe on the fifth day and gather at the house for the naming on the seventh day. The midwife receives her payment at the gathering, and she is paid in cloth and rice, receiving also a bangle for cutting the cord. She receives twice as much rice for a boy as for a girl. The name is chosen by the parents of the child and it is announced to the villagers by the midwife. Holding the child in her arms, she says to them if the child is a boy: "From today call him so-and-so when he goes hunting." If the child is a girl she says: "From today call her so-and-so when you call her to draw water." The first-born boy is named after his father's father and the second boy is named after his mother's father. The first girl receives the name of her father's mother and the second girl that of her mother's mother. When these names have been used, children are given the names of uncles and aunts, with a preference on the whole for the father's family. Before the naming the guests ask: "Of what country is this child?" When the name chosen comes from the father's family, the question is answered by giving the name of the father's village, the mother's village being given when the chosen name comes from her relations. If a child cries excessively it may be put down to the fact that it is unhappy over its name. Babulal of Barikul wrote: "Sometimes among us the children sleep happily right from birth and at other times they

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[1] *Melia azadirachta*, L. For its connection with godlings of disease see W. Crooke, *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, especially pp. 119 ff., and index.